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SUBJECT: SRI LANKAN ISSUE: CENTER AND TAMIL NADU ON THE SAME PAGE,
SAYS NATIONAL SECURITY ADVISOR

REF: Chennai 1746

¶1. (U) With the Sri Lankan Tamil issue grabbing increased media and political attention in Tamil Nadu, GOI National Security Adviser M.K. Narayanan held discussions with Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M. Karunanidhi on August 9. After the meeting, Narayanan told the Chennai media corps that "there is complete unanimity on the issue of foreign policy between the state government and the Center." According to The Hindu of August 10, Narayanan also made it clear that GOI would not directly intervene in the peace process in Sri Lanka.

¶2. (U) Narayanan told the media that he came to Chennai as Prime Minister Singh's special envoy to brief the Chief Minister on the discussions between India and Sri Lanka during the June visit to New Delhi of GOSL Foreign Minister Managala Samaraweera. In the discussions with Samaraweera, according to Narayanan, India had explained its position on ensuring the safety and security of the island Tamils and about taking steps for the devolution of powers, while stressing the need for making a distinction between the LTTE and Tamils of that country.

¶3. (SBU) Asked if the Center had any second thoughts on the ban on the LTTE, Narayanan reportedly remarked that the Center considers the LTTE to be a dangerous organization and hence the ban. "I don't think the Center has any doubt on the ban on the LTTE," he is quoted as saying. Narayanan, however, does not believe the LTTE would pose a threat to Tamil Nadu because "they would like to have the support of India to some extent." In The Hindu news report there also is a vague mention of Narayanan briefing the Chief Minister on "certain security threats that have emanated" about which the Chief Secretary would take necessary action. (Post will seek to develop more information in this regard.)

¶4. (SBU) Journalist sources commented to us that Narayanan's meeting with the Chief Minister indicates the GOI's eagerness not to let the Sri Lankan Tamil issue get out of hand in Tamil Nadu and cause any friction between the DMK and the Congress party. The alacrity with which the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) discontinued its training course for Sri Lankan police personnel in Tamil Nadu soon after the pro-LTTE parties complained about it (reftel) is another such indication.

¶5. (U) Earlier in the week, on August 7, Chief Minister Karunanidhi had mentioned in the Tamil Nadu Assembly that, although the ban on the LTTE may be debatable, the state government will enforce the ban and that anyone violating it would have to bear the consequences. The issue had arisen in the context of a question about a small pro-LTTE demonstration in the city of Vellore on July 31.

¶5. (SBU) COMMENT: The GOI's message to GoTN seems to be: we will support you in articulating your sympathies about the suffering Tamils of Sri Lanka but we also will continue to treat the LTTE

differently; they cannot be trusted. HOPPER